



*Beloved, let us love
one another; for love
is of God.*

1 John 4:7

Reflection:

July 2021

Sanyasi was eager to grow in perfection. He viewed the little attachments of the world around with utmost contempt. So, he withdrew from all to pray by himself. . . One day, little Vasanthi came near, sat with him. There awakened in him a pure, mysterious love. She then went away. . . Now he started seeing everything around him in a new light. His life was transformed. In the little attachments of those around, he could see the varied forms of love giving meaning and depth.

(Sanyasi, meaning an ascetic or hermit, and Vasanthi are characters in Tagore's play 'Sanyasi')

In the heart of every man and woman there is a yearning for love. Love in its varied forms stirs up our hearts. Jesus renewed and perfected this call to love. Moreover, he became the best model of love and strongly challenged us to lead a life rich in love. Further, he continues to give every person, thirsty for love, his beautiful gift of the Holy Spirit, who moves us to experience his love, and in turn helps us to grow in love.

One big mystery of life is that though we want so much to get love and give love, yet as the Apostle says, we 'do the very thing we hate to do' (Rom. 7:19). This challenge of losing life's flavour or 'saltiness' is not just with the worldly, but even with all of us the so called 'spiritual' persons. With all good intentions we often fail to love; we segregate ourselves into 'we' and 'they', reject those who are not 'right' and even detest all kinds of 'others'. When author/philosopher Elie Wiesel says the opposite of love is not hatred but indifference, we only think of the priest and Levite in the Good Samaritan story. But aren't we also guilty of practicing a form of loveless maturity that makes us increasingly indifferent to others and suspicious of all eagerness of getting connected with and helping a neighbour?

"Let us love", said St. Therese, "since that is what our hearts were made for". A life without love is futile in this world and never worthy of a life thereafter. So, our journey of growing in maturity is a journey from what is not love to true love. The Pauline song of love (1 Cor.13) is just that. A daily conscious journey from jealousy, boastfulness, arrogance, rudeness, insistence, being irritable, resentful and rejoicing at wrong, to progress towards being patient, kind, rejoicing in the right, bearing everything, trusting, hoping and enduring. The challenge is, it is either/or; to love or not to love. Our inner heart can at a time have only one disposition, to be in darkness or to be in the light of love. It is a constant choice.

How rich and delightful is the life of a Christian, surrounded by inspirations and props to build an active life of love! When we decide to give up the dark realms of indifference and hatred and courageously live a life of love, all the help we need is close at hand. Christ is our model and the Holy Spirit stimulates us. The Bread of life is there for strengthening, the word of God to set our hearts ablaze, the little anointed friendship circles to become nurseries of love, and the needy ones around to offer constant challenges. Yes, when we start looking at life and all that is in and around us, as an exercise arena to practice and grow in love the whole journey of life becomes an adventure of brand new sorts.

And, love is not always flowers, but thorns as well. When thorns of love prick us, it is good to remind ourselves that it is the path towards fullness of joy here and hereafter. In the words of St. Augustine "Since love grows within you, so beauty grows. For love is the beauty of the soul". This journey of love that we embark upon is a path that takes us to moments of great satisfaction, beauty and joy in this world and, finally, towards a life unending. Let us make this journey looking up to Jesus, Mary and the saints who are our best models of love.

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